

# On-Farm Beef Finishing Planning Budget

**B**eef cattle producers raising calves from birth to finish may use this planning budget to estimate their costs and returns in 2026. Table 1 presents estimates for the costs and returns associated with raising and finishing calves born in spring- and fall-calving herds, based on price forecasts as of October 2025. Detailed assumptions and feed requirements for systems starting with each calving season are summarized in Tables 2 through 5.

The production practices used to develop these estimates assume a 50-cow herd with purchased replacements, drylot backgrounding for spring calves and pasture backgrounding for fall calves, and grain-based finishing using self-feeders. Finishing weight is roughly 1,450 pounds and animals are sold by live weight. Animals are 540 days of age at slaughter.

**Table 1. Missouri beef cow-calf planning budget for 2026.**

	Fall calving (dollars per animal sold)	Spring calving (dollars per animal sold)	Your estimate
<b>Income</b>			
Live cattle sales	3,520.80	3,474.80	
Culled breeding stock	256.33	275.83	
<b>Total income</b>	<b>3,777.13</b>	<b>3,750.63</b>	
<b>Operating costs</b>			
Pasture cost	426.80	373.45	
Cow herd feed	336.43	295.50	
Backgrounding feed	62.93	126.41	
Finishing feed	451.80	448.96	
Labor	269.08	295.56	
Veterinary and drugs	56.67	57.58	
Machinery, utilities and repair	367.78	405.05	
Cow and bull replacement	555.55	659.09	
Marketing and professional fees	115.40	114.98	
Miscellaneous	10.00	10.00	
Operating interest	142.25	149.44	
<b>Total operating costs</b>	<b>2,794.70</b>	<b>2,936.02</b>	
<b>Ownership costs</b>			
Farm business overhead	37.77	37.51	
Depreciation on facilities and equipment	20.33	21.82	
Interest on capital assets	299.22	300.95	
Insurance and taxes on capital assets	77.29	79.37	
<b>Total ownership costs</b>	<b>434.61</b>	<b>439.65</b>	
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>3,229.31</b>	<b>3,375.67</b>	
<b>Income over operating costs</b>	<b>982.43</b>	<b>814.62</b>	
<b>Income over total costs</b>	<b>547.82</b>	<b>374.96</b>	

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

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**Table 2. Assumptions in Missouri on-farm beef finishing planning budget — fall calving, pasture backgrounding, grain finishing.**

Description	Value	Description	Value
Live cattle price, dollars per hundredweight	244.50	Cows in herd	50
Cull cow price, dollars per hundredweight	162.00	Bulls in herd	2
Days to weaning	210	Weaning weight, pounds	590
Days backgrounded	120	Backgrounded weight, pounds	760
Days on feed	210	Finished weight, pounds	1,440
Replacement heifer value, dollars per head	4,000	Marketing fee, percent of sales	2.5
Replacement rate, percent of cow herd	12.0	Operating interest, percent APR	7.25
Labor, hours per head	11.5	Labor cost, dollars per hour	22.00

**Table 3. Assumptions in Missouri on-farm beef finishing planning budget — spring calving, drylot backgrounding, grain finishing.**

Description	Value	Description	Value
Live cattle price, dollars per hundredweight	238.00	Cows in herd	50
Cull cow price, dollars per hundredweight	150.00	Bulls in herd	2
Days to weaning	210	Weaning weight, pounds	570
Days backgrounded	120	Backgrounded weight, pounds	785
Days on feed	210	Finished weight, pounds	1,460
Replacement heifer value, dollars per head	4,000	Marketing fee, percent of sales	2.5
Replacement rate, percent of cow herd	14.0	Operating interest, percent APR	7.25
Labor, hours per head	12.5	Labor cost, dollars per hour	22.00

**Table 4. Feed assumptions per animal sold in Missouri on-farm finishing planning budget — fall calving, pasture backgrounding, grain finishing.**

Feed description	Stages used	Pricing unit	Dollars per unit	Total amount	Total dollars
Pasture	Cow-calf, backgrounding	acres	106.70	4 acres	426.80
Mixed hay	Cow-calf, finishing	tons	90.00	6,400 pounds	288.00
Shelled corn	Finishing	bushels	4.23	3,853 pounds	291.06
Dried distillers grain	All stages	tons	175.00	1,821 pounds	159.34
Salt and mineral	All stages	pounds	0.60	174 pounds	104.72
Limestone	Backgrounding, finishing	hundredweight	13.00	61 pounds	8.03
<b>Total</b>				12,309 pounds	<b>1,277.95</b>

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

**Table 5. Feed assumptions per animal sold in Missouri on-farm finishing planning budget — spring calving, drylot backgrounding, grain finishing.**

Feed description	Stages used	Pricing unit	Dollars per unit	Total amount	Total dollars
Pasture	Cow-calf	acres	106.70	3.5 acres	373.45
Mixed hay	All stages	tons	90.00	6,595 pounds	296.73
Shelled corn	Backgrounding, finishing	bushels	4.23	4,384 pounds	331.18
Dried distillers grain	All stages	tons	175.00	1,455 pounds	127.27
Salt and mineral	All stages	pounds	0.60	179 pounds	107.16
Limestone	Backgrounding, finishing	hundredweight	13.00	66 pounds	8.52
<b>Total</b>				12,678 pounds	<b>1,244.31</b>

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

## Returns to on-farm finishing

Producers considering finishing beef strictly for direct-to-consumer freezer beef should understand how production scale affects their decisions. The finishing costs in this model reflect a small-scale feedlot that buys, mixes and processes raw feed inputs into an incomplete ration fed through self-feeders. The balance of the ration (roughage) is fed through free-choice hay. This business model depends on the cost of gain being lower than the opportunity cost of selling the calves at weaning. For example, a 550-pound calf selling for \$400 per hundredweight is more profitable than a 1,400-pound steer selling for \$230 per hundredweight when the cost of gain is more than \$1.20 per pound.

Economies of scale are important in the cattle finishing business. Small operators may be better suited to buying feed premixed rather than mixing it on the farm. Similarly, larger operations than the one described will have the scale to justify the equipment and facilities necessary to handle discounted feed ingredients that can sometimes be produced or obtained at a lower cost. Many undervalued feed ingredients may have minimum purchase quantities, excluding small operations from utilizing them in their rations. As a result, the costs and returns experienced on an individual operation can vary widely from what is described in this budget.

## Other resources

Use the resources below to customize on-farm finishing budgets for your operation, explore marketing opportunities or locate other beef cattle budgets from University of Missouri Extension.

- [Missouri Beef On-Farm Finishing Budget for Fall Calving \(XLSX\)](https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/on-farm-finishing-budget-fall.xlsx) (extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/on-farm-finishing-budget-fall.xlsx)
- [Missouri Beef On-Farm Finishing Budget for Spring Calving \(XLSX\)](https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/on-farm-finishing-budget-spring.xlsx) (extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/on-farm-finishing-budget-spring.xlsx)
- [Evaluating Marketing Opportunities for Local Beef in Missouri](https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g204) (extension.missouri.edu/publications/g204) showcases opportunities to market beef raised and finished on-farm directly to consumers as either freezer beef (wholes, halves and quarters) or as retail cuts.
- Other beef cattle budgets and related information can be found on the [Beef Extension publications page](https://extension.missouri.edu/programs/beef-extension/publications) (extension.missouri.edu/programs/beef-extension/publications).



Check out the complete collection of Missouri crop and livestock enterprise budgets at [muext.us/MissouriAgBudgets](https://muext.us/MissouriAgBudgets)